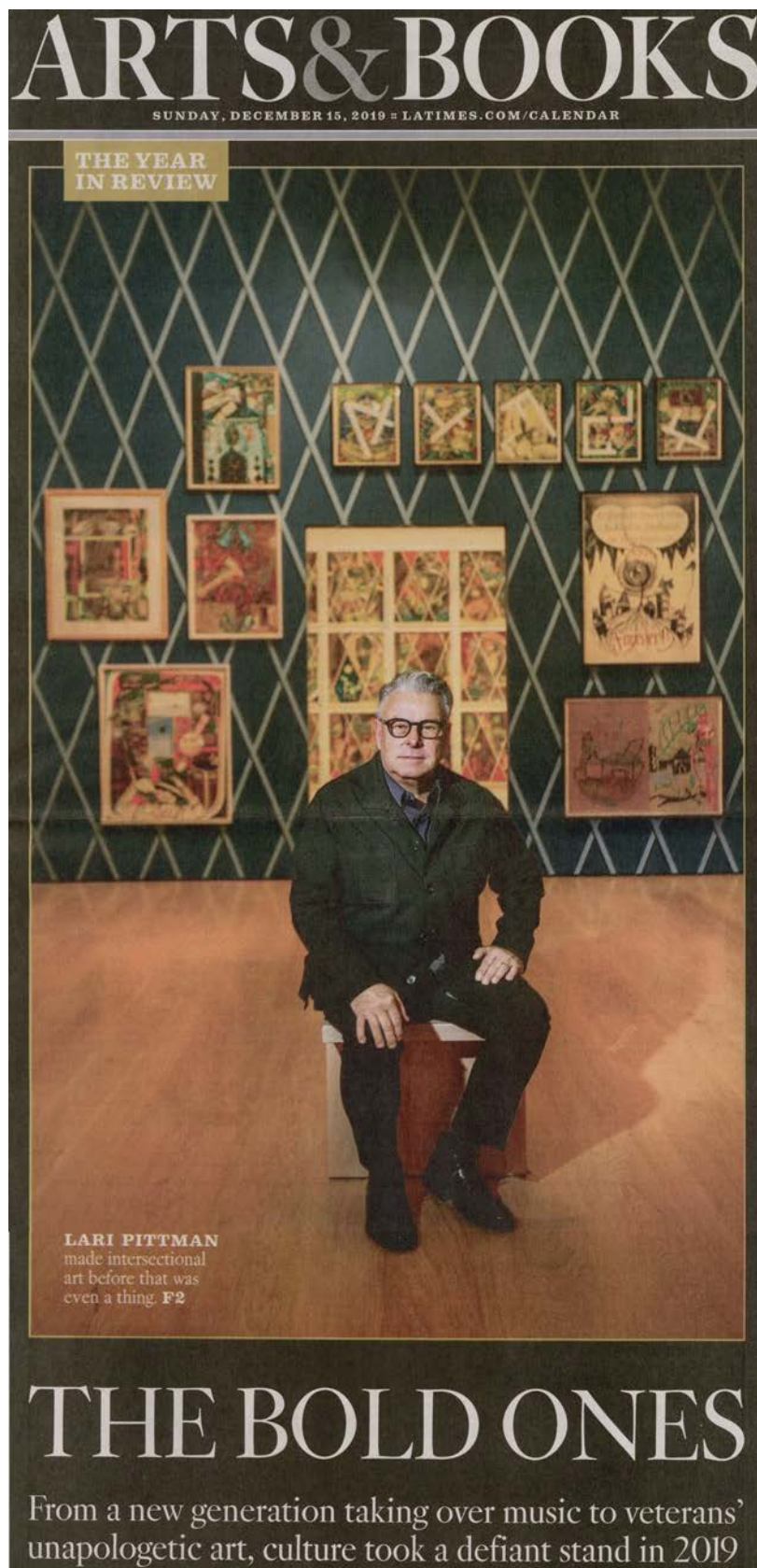


REGEN PROJECTS

Miranda, Carolina. "Lari Pittman Maps Our Times." Los Angeles Times (December 15, 2019) pp. F1–2 [ill.]

Los Angeles Times



REGEN PROJECTS

LARI PITTMAN MAPS OUR TIMES

BY CAROLINA A. MIRANDA

This is a year in which the culture has wrestled with issues of equity and power, with representation and lack thereof, with sexuality in its vast and wondrous forms, with violent legacies of imperialism and the fusions they have birthed.

Which makes Lari Pittman one prescient artist.

Since the mid-1980s, the Los Angeles painter has tackled these topics in riotous canvases that have channeled the yearnings of queer sexuality, cried out at the ravages of the AIDS crisis and unearthed the colonial legacies that can lie, quite literally, beneath our feet. And he has done so with panache and bracing humor, at times, by rendering prim and proper Victorian silhouettes in sundry acts of impropriety.

This year, the museum world has caught up to the Colombian American painter's prodigious output, not to mention his textured worldview — one that has been shaped by an upbringing in South America, his experience as a gay man in the 1980s and the physical violence he himself has en-

dured. (Pittman was shot during a home invasion in 1985.)

In September, the Hammer Museum drew back the curtain on the artist's wild, magic-carpet ride of a retrospective, "Lari Pittman: Declaration of Independence," on view through Jan. 5. (It travels to the Kistefos-Museet in Norway next year.)

In more than 80 paintings and 50 works on paper, Pittman tackles all of the aforementioned issues and more.

"He's a chronicler of our time," said the show's curator, Connie Butler, in a September interview. "And he takes it on in ways that many artists are shy to do. He takes on the big themes of love and death and sex and violence and paints these endlessly intricate and absorbing reflections back on these different subjects."

And he does it without sparing a detail.

Pittman is intrigued by concepts of exaggeration and hyperbole, and will often let his canvases explode with layers of imagery inspired by a kitchen sink of cultural debris: landscape painting, textile design, South American craft, sign painting, calligraphy, botanical il-

lustration, geometric pattern and art historical iconography, to name but a few.

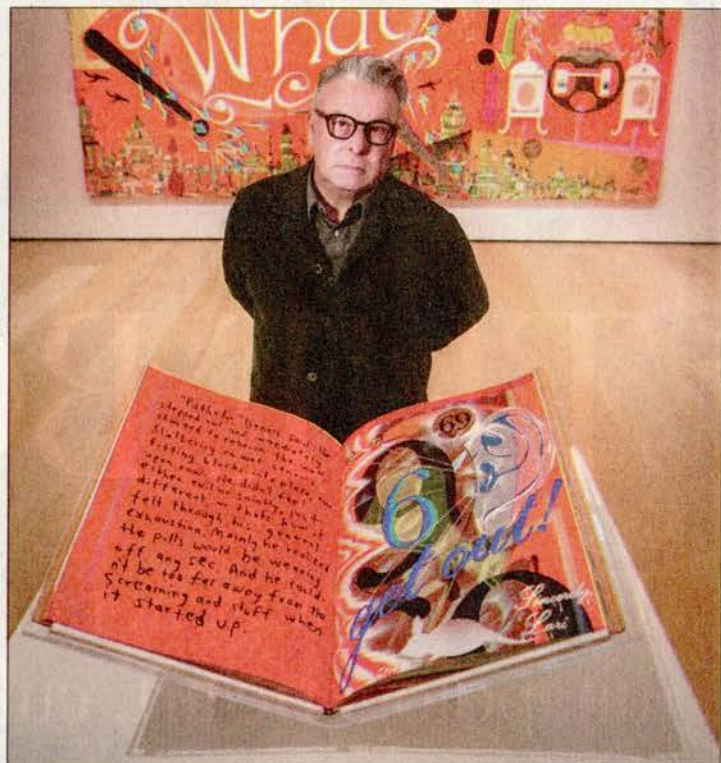
"When I look at minimalism, I enjoy it," he told me during a conversation in his meticulously organized Atwater Village studio early this fall. "But it's not me. I can't own it. It feels like a galaxy far, far away."

He added with a grin: "I can see how minimalism came out of Calvinism."

In Pittman's able hands, this hyper-assortment of symbols and techniques come together in ways that are greater than the sum of their parts. They track the homophobia and ignorance of the Reagan era. They examine the legacies of our tangled and violent colonial histories — in Latin America and the U.S. They are the ebullience of love and the heartbreak of loss.

"It rewards close looking," Butler said of Pittman's work. "I keep finding new satisfying things to look at and think about in the paintings. They are Renaissance maps."

Maps to our era, charting the paths that have led us to the moment we now find ourselves in.



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LARI Pittman's Hammer exhibition is on view through Jan. 5.